

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8520
INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, NI
SUBJECT: STUDENTS: SITUATION UNCLEAR

REF:18-) IBADAN 574, B) LAGOS 6216, C) LAGOS 6027

1. SUMMARY: A NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES HAVE REOPENED BUT STUDENTS HAVE CALLED FOR CONTINUED BOYCOTT OF CLASSES, APPARENTLY WITH SOME SUCCESS. THE GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO THE STUDENT CRISIS OPENED AND STUDENTS WALKED OUT. OKEOWO'S LAWYER HAS BEEN ARRESTED. NEWSPAPERS ARE SUPPORTING THE FMG. THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS FACED BY THE FMG COULD LEAD TO FURTHER TROUBLES, BUT THS SITUATION REMAINS QUIET FOR THE MOMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. A NUMBER OF CAMPUSES HAVE REOPENED, BUT THE PRESS REPORTS STUDENTS HAVE CALLED FOR A CONTINUED BOYCOTT OF CLASSES IN IBADAN, IFE, ILORIN, BENIN AND CALABAR. AS IBADAN REPORTED REF A THE BOYCOTT APPEARS TO BE EFFECTIVE IN AT LEAST IBADAN, IFE AND LORIN. THE BIGGEST TEST WILL COME NEXT WEEK WHEN THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS IS SCHEDULED TO
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REOPEN.

3. AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY HAS REPORTEDLY CALLED FOR THE RESUMPTION OF CLASSES NEXT WEEK WITH THE UNUUSUAL STEP OF REQUIRING EACH STUDENT TO SIGN A STATEMENT SAYING HE WILL ENSURE THE "PREVALENCE

OF PEACE AND NORMALCY" AS AGREED BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE STUDENT UNION LEADERS. THE HERALD MAY 19 REPORTS THAT STUDENT LEADERS HAVE REJECTED THE PROPOSAL AND CALLED THE REOPENING "UNTIMELY AND PREMATURE."

4. THE MOHAMMED COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE STUDENT CRISIS OPENED ITS HEARINGS WEDNESDAY MAY 17 AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES WHO ATTENDED THE OPENING SESSION REPORTEDLY WALKED OUT. PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE, THE STUDENTS STATED THEIR CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE INQUIRY INCLUDING THE RELEASE OF DETAINED STUDENT LEADERS AND AMENDMENT OF THE COMMISSION'S TERMS OF REFERENCE SUCH AS THE INSTRUCTION TO INVESTIGATE "THE ROLE OF STUDENT UNIONS AND LEADERSHIP IN CREATING THE DISTURBANCES ARISING FROM THE CRISIS." THE COMMISSION IS RECEIVING EXTENSIVE PRESS PLAY INCLUDING DETAILED REPORTS ON THE DEATH OF THE STUDENT IN LAGOS WHICH BLAME THE POLICE FOR DELAYING THE AMBULANCE WHICH WAS TAKING HIM TO THE HOSPITAL.

5. CHIEF GANI FAWEHINMI, OKEOWO'S LAWYER, WAS ARRESTED TUESDAY EVENING AND CHARGED WITH ASSAULTING A POLICE OFFICER, OBSTRUCTING A POLICE OFFICER IN EXECUTION OF HIS DUTY, KIDNAPPING A POLICE OFFICER

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AND THEFT OF A POLICE CAMERA. FAWEHINMI'S VERSION OF EVENTS WHICH RECEIVED WIDE PRESS COVERAGE AFTER HIS APPEARANCE IN THE COURT ON THURSDAY IS THAT TWO NIGERIAN SECURITY ORGANIZATION OFFICERS HAD HIS HOUSE UNDER SURVEILLANCE AND WERE TAKING PICTURES, AFTER A MEETING WITH STUDENT LEADERS THE STUDENTS ASSAULTED THE POLICE CREATING PANIC IN THE AREA. AT HIS URGING THE STUDENTS BROUGHT THE TWO POLICEMEN TO HIS CHAMBERS. HE REPORTED THE POLICEMEN "PLEADED WITH ME THAT I SHOULD NOT RELEASE THEM TO THE HANDS OF THE CROWD BECAUSE THEY WOULD BE LYNCHED." HE ALLEGEDLY ASSISTED THEM, EVEN LOANING ONE A NAIRO TO TAKE A TAXI. LATER THAT EVENING HE CALLED 50 ANTI-RIOT AND 15 PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMEN ARRIVED, BROKE DOWN HIS DOORS, SEARCHED HIS HOUSE, TOOK SOME FILES AND ARRESTED HIM. FAWEHINMI ALSO DISPLAYED A NECK INJURY AND BLOOD STAINS WHICH HE SAID RESULTED FROM BEING MANHANDLED BY THE POLICE. HE CLAIMED THAT THE CHIEF STATE PROSECUTOR HAD THREATENED HIM SAYING HE WOULD BE "SERIOUSLY DEALT WITH IF

I DID NOT WITHDRAW MY STATEMENT AGAINST THE POLICE" IN THE OKEOWO HEARING (REF C). THE HEARING ON HIS RELEASE WAS ADJOURNED UNTIL TODAY.

6. THE DAILY TIMES MAY 19 IN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "AWAY FROM THE BRINK" CALLED ON THE STUDENTS TO END THEIR BOYCOTT SAYING, "WHAT MAKES IT FINALLY UNACCEPTABLE IS THAT STUDENTL APPEAR TO ASSUME, FIRST, THAT MAINTAINING UNITY IN THEIR RANKS IS A NOBLER CAUSE THAN PROTECTING THE SECURITY OF THE STATE....SECONDLY, THAT THEY ARE, IN FACT, IN A POSITION TO COMPEL THE GOVERNMENT TO DO AS THEY WISH....IT IS MUCH BETTER, THEN, FOR THEM TO MATCH THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN GESTURE OF RECONCILIATION BY RETURNING TO CLASSES."

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7. THE "WORK-TO-RULE" CAMPAIGN OF THE DOCTORS CONTINUES TO HAVE WIDESPREAD IMPACT. THE NEW NIGERIAN MAY 19 STRONGLY OPPOSED THE DOCTOR'S POSITION NOTING THAT OTHER PROFESSIONALS HAD ACCEPTED THE DECISION AND THAT THE DOCTORS' ARGUMENT IS "HARD TO FATHOM". THE NEW NIGERIAN CONCLUDES, "THE CHOICE HERE IS REALLY ONE BETWEEN THE LARGER PUBLIC GOOD AND THE PRIVATE GOOD OF INDIVIDUAL DOCTORS. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT AS TO WHICH MUST TAKE PRECEDENCE."

8. DEALING WITH OTHER ISSUES WHICH AFFECT WORKERS, THE FMG THROUGH THE MEDIA MAY 18 WIDELY HERALDED THE ARRIVAL OF A "LARGE CONSIGNMENT OF RICE AND OTHER FOOD ITEMS" ORDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THE FOOD IS TO BE SOLD "AT REDUCED RATES" TO THE WORKERS AS ONE OF THE "NON-MONETARY RELIEF MEASURES."

9. COMMENT: WHILE THE STUDENT PROBLEM APPEARS TO BE UNDER CONTROL, THE CONTINUED BOYCOTT OF CLASSES IS AN OMINOUS SIGN. MANY KEY STUDENT LEADERS AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE STILL UNDER DETENTION AND THE GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY HOPES TO PREVENT FURTHER DISTURBANCES BY THIS ACTION. AT THE SAME TIME THE DETENTION OF LEADERS APPEARS TO HAVE PROVOKED SOME GROUND SWELL OF STUDENT SUPPORT WHICH COULD LEAD TO FURTHER PROBLEMS. THE DOCTORS' SLOWDOWN ALSO AGGRAVATES THE CONTINUING PROBLEM OF THE COMMON MAN. IN SHORT, VARIOUS PROBLEMS FACED BY THE FMG COULD LEAD TO FURRTHER TROUBLES, BUT THE SITUATIONS REMAINS QUIET FOR THE MOMENT.

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